



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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WEDNESDAY MORNING, *May 11th.*

AT PORTMAN ROOMS.

MRS. CORRIE GRANT in the chair.

MRS. STEINTHAL read a paper on

THE
UTILITARIAN TRAINING OF OUR DAUGHTERS.

MRS. STEINTHAL: At the onset I must explain the use of the word "utilitarian" in my title, lest it prove a stumbling-block in the minds of many I would fain interest in the practical solution of many difficulties that beset the mothers of daughters who have lately left school, and are for the first time in their lives comparatively free.

I own the title is cumbersome, but it takes the place of a still more cumbersome heading. How to train our daughters in domestic arts and philanthropy, would barely express all I wish to indicate.

John Stuart Mill was the first to bring the word utilitarian into use. But he did not invent it, he adopted it from a passing expression in Mr. Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, where it is used in a wrong sense, and not as we to-day understand it. The Rev. Micah Balwhidder writes, "I told my people that I thought they had more sense than to secede from Christianity to become utilitarian, for that it would be a confession of ignorance of the faith they deserted, seeing that it was the main duty inculcated by our religion to do all in morals and manners to which the new-fangled doctrine of utility pretended."

This view of Galt's, which was shared by succeeding writers, brought the term into disrepute, and some of this feeling of horror still lingers among us. As a name for one single opinion, and not a set of opinions, the term supplies a

want in the language, and offers (as in my title for instance) a convenient mode of avoiding tiresome circumlocution.

"In the golden rule of our Lord Jesus Christ, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbours as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of Christian utilitarian morality.

"So first we would enjoin that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness, or the interest of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole; and secondly that the aim of right education should be to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole."

A direct impulse to promote the general good must be one of the habitual motives of action in every individual, and the sentiments connected therewith should fill and permeate every human being.

In the Parents' National Educational Union, we all, as you well know, believe that if we sow an act, we reap a habit. So for a few moments I must ask you to consider with me how our little daughters can be trained early in the habits of usefulness and unselfishness. Utilitarianism, like charity, begins at home. In these days of cram and intellectual gymnastics, it is well for us to consider the position of domestic arts in home training. The importance of this training is now being realized by the Education Department, and in Elementary Schools, Domestic Economy and Hygiene and Cooking are now almost universally taught.

In one private school I know the girls of 11, 12 and 13 have cooking lessons once a week, and the older girls study Nursing, Ambulance Work, etc.

Let our daughters be trained to become useful and practical heads of households, and we shall not hear of young married women boiling eggs for an hour, and wondering why they don't get soft, or ordering 14 lbs. of sirloin for a dinner of two. You can each add many instances of ignorance—ignorance, alas, in the very department that is considered essentially womanly, and as appertaining entirely to the woman.

Let each girl feel that she is of use in the home. Don't let her be forty before you discover that she is no more a child. I knew once a woman of 32, who dare not buy a hat or accept

an invitation to tea without her mother's sanction. There was no utilitarian training in that family.

The wider gift of sympathy for others outside the home can be fostered in many ways. One of the best societies for children I know, is the Order of Chivalry, founded by Lord Winchelsea in memory of his only son. Each child who becomes a companion has a poor child given her to write to and help with love and affection. I have been lately much impressed by the good this guild can do by watching the growth of unselfishness in an only child who had joined.

Her delight at possessing a child her very own was intense, and her thoughts soon constantly turned on the little one. The first primroses she gathered *must* go to the East End, because she was sure the child had never seen one before. She disliked sewing, but when she heard what a number of children there were in the home, she made a little dress for her, and saved up her money so that each child should have an Easter egg. She is kinder and gentler at home, and thinks much more of other people's feelings than she did. She is, in fact, tasting the first joys of universal brotherhood.

To-day we are passing through a crisis. Our daughters are not brought up as we were, still less as their grandmothers were, and for the moment there is a danger of the doctrine—that anyone can best serve the happiness of others by the sacrifice of her own—being put on one side. Mrs. Lynn Linton writes:—"In our life are many epochs, some of greater and others of less importance, but all marking a changed condition, which brings with it a change in both outlook and duties. Leaving school is one of these epochs, as going to school has been before it—this latter having been the introduction to a new world where the home estimate of character had gone for nothing, and where the ground was cleared for a new reputation to be raised thereon, the former being the first step towards that independent self-development which comes with comparative freedom and the power of choice. And of the two, naturally the former is the more important." The first two years after leaving school are to many the most unsatisfactory and trying years in their lives.

Parents and nurses first train a child how to walk, how to act—they order the time for feeding and for sleeping, they train the child in right and good habits—and the child is, so

to speak, in mental and physical leading strings. Then comes the first school life, *and a time table*. The teacher succeeds the nurse and the girl is trained in habits of right thinking, and has her days mapped out from the time she rises out of bed until the evening. She is taught languages, she devotes an hour to music, half an hour to art, two to Latin and so forth. All this time the life of the girl is ruled and governed by an outside will.

Now there is little progress made without effort. Unless parents and teachers realize that the girl may, in the future, be a woman worker, a secretary or a president of many societies, that she may be a guardian, a school board member, or a writer, and that therefore she must be allowed in early years to stand at times alone and erect, and be a living original human being, we shall continue to be affronted with the difficulties we are now experiencing.

The general outcry to-day, from our large towns, is that girls will not be interested in good works, that they will not sacrifice themselves for the good and happiness of others less favoured than themselves.

I constantly receive letters from workers who have borne the burden and heat of the day and who feel that they ought to lead more restful lives in their old age, and that younger and more active women should take their places.

Many add that the work they have built up with their life's prayers and blood runs a danger of extinction, just at a time when all difficulties have been conquered and the seed is bearing rich fruit. This is probably the experience of many who are present to-day, and as the question closely affects mothers, I felt that this meeting would be a fitting opportunity to bring the subject before you, and then consult with you as to the best way of dealing with it.

My attention was first drawn to it about five years ago, when on a committee of an Arts and Crafts Exhibition. We invited forty girls who had nearly all recently left school, to act as stewards. Two meetings were held previous to the exhibition to fully explain to and drill them in their duties. Each girl was to be present two hours each day at stated times. She had to sit by the stalls and help the lookers-on, to take an intelligent interest in the brass-work, wood-carving, embroideries, and so on. During the course of the exhibition,

only four girls could be absolutely relied on. Afternoon tea, tennis, a bicycle ride were among many excuses sent in for non-attendance; but in many instances no excuse was ever sent.

Need I add that this is one of the towns from which a cry now rises for younger workers, lest good and well-established work fails for lack of girls who love their neighbours as themselves. But let us not be unjust to the girls. We are so glad and ready to shift blame on to other shoulders. Are we mothers not the people to be blamed? Have we trained our daughters first in usefulness, and then in methods and principles of work? Do we not leave her to gain this knowledge through her own experience, when, alas, others suffer through and with her? The word "training" strikes the key-note of my paper. Our girls must be trained workers, trained business women, trained philanthropists. I sometimes look back in an agony of shame, as Marcella and many Marcellas must have done, on the terrible mistakes I made the first two years after leaving school. (To one old woman, I well remember, I constantly took brandy to ease her pain, until the police told me of the harm I was doing).

For two winters we have tried an interesting experiment in my village, the details of which will, I hope, not weary you.

We started under the auspices of the B.W.T.A., but as we soon found we worked on broader lines, for that and other reasons we severed our connection with it and christened ourselves The Neighbours' Guild. Thirty-nine girls accepted an invitation to a drawing-room meeting. The need of trained and organized workers was first put before them, and it was proposed and seconded that the Guild should be started. The next business was to arrange the various sections, which were four:—

(1) *The Needlework Section*, which was to meet once a fortnight. Girls could join this who could sew well, and it was decided that clothes should be made for the twelve children in our orphanage, the girls taking their own measurements, and buying the material. Ten girls at once joined.

(2) *The Entertainment Section*.—Each member must be able to play some instrument, or sing, or recite. The meetings for practice would be held once a fortnight, and

concerts would be given for charitable purposes. Last winter this section went to the Workhouse, to three Bands of Hope, and two meetings, and only a week last Saturday helped me, at a day's notice, in an entertainment for Dr. Barnardo. They are always prepared, and always willing and ready to help. All through the summer they give one concert every three weeks at the Convalescent Home. They have learnt several toy symphonies and sing several glees and plantation songs very sweetly. At present there are fifteen members.

(3) *The Girls' Club Section*.—Twenty-three village girls meet twice a week from seven to nine to learn embroidery and chip carving. This winter only two members of the Guild have been able to teach these arts, but the work done has been excellent, and I have brought specimens with me to-day.

Each section has a secretary, who lets the President know the date of each meeting, so that she can attend if she feels inclined to. The unexpected popping in is a great stimulus to the workers.

(4) *The Sick Visitor*.—Being in only a small place we do not need more than three visitors. The President is told of every case of home sickness of girl or child, and sends a note to one of the visitors, who visits and looks after the invalid until she recovers. This prevents overlapping, and ensures attention being given to each case. In a large town forty or fifty sick visitors would be a great boon to the sick nurses, who often do not know for whom to send to their poor patients.

In one town, where the Guild was started last spring, I am told that it has started a settlement in the poorest district, where the girls go in turn to help and teach their poorer neighbours. Their entertainment section has also given great pleasure to the inmates of the hospitals and Workhouse.

You probably wonder if we ever all meet? Yes. Every six weeks we have what is called a business drill, and for this we have adopted Lady Henry Somerset's capital programme for committee work. As each girl enters the room she is presented with a card on which is written a name descriptive of a type generally to be found at a committee—Miss As-it-was, Miss Progressive, Miss Growler, Miss Keep-'em-right, Miss Practical, Miss Timid, Miss General Nuisance, and so

on. A fictitious secretary's and treasurer's report is first read and a discussion follows. Each member must rise and first address the president before speaking. The playing of other parts causes them to lose their bashfulness, and really capital speaking is quite the rule at our meetings. The girls are taught how to take resolutions and amendments.

Not one would now make the mistake said to have been made by a bishop who once put the resolution before the amendment to a meeting. We have all witnessed painful efforts made at ladies' committee meetings to manage them in an efficient and business-like way, but which have generally ended in various groups, each discussing the business in sibilant whispers. We can all see the agonized face of the chairwoman when asked by two or three ladies after a resolution has been passed, "What did we vote for last?" If our Neighbours' Guilds work well and intelligently such committees will soon cease to meet.

All the members thoroughly enjoy the business drill. It should go smartly and not last longer than three-quarters of an hour.

Will our branches consider if they can take up this work for our daughters who have left school? Let us first see to it that our own have a desire to work, and to realize that *duty*, that "daughter of the voice of God," is the noblest guide for both young and old, and the guide whose path, if sometimes hard, infallibly leads to the most beautiful and glowing results. Perhaps we meet with failure at times, and a girl will leave us because a coal merchant's daughter plays a violin, and another objects to singing plantation songs, and another that the cuckoo is beneath her dignity in the toy symphony, but my experience is that when one falls out, two always take her place.

A great deal of the success depends on the president. She must understand girl-nature, and have wide and broad sympathies. The secretaries must be well chosen and possess business capacity and a conscientious sense of duty. Invite the daughters of your Union *and their friends* to attend a drawing-room meeting, and if you can arouse interest do start a Neighbours' Guild next autumn.

Let us cultivate and cherish in our daughters an intelligent sympathy which shall shine on the joys and sorrows, not

only of the lovely, but on the unlovely, and thus help to make man at last perfect even as his Father in heaven, who makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For eighteen centuries these words have rung in the ears of men, but who can boast that he has fathomed their meaning or conceived any plan of life which will give them practical realization? To feel such genuine sympathy for the stupid, the mean-minded, the vicious, so as to enable us to make for them the same sacrifices we should readily make for a friend, this is to reach that zenith of goodness which the world has realized in Christ. Will you accept our motto for your Neighbours' Guild:—

"Beloved, we must be here to work,
And men who work can only work for men,
And, not to work in vain, must comprehend
Humanity—and so work humanly,
And raise men's bodies still by raising souls,
As God did first."—*E. B. Browning.*

Condensed report of MRS. SPENCER CURWEN'S paper on MUSIC TEACHING.

As generally used, the words "music teaching" would promise a discourse on the teaching of the pianoforte. Why, of all the musical media, the pianoforte alone should be labelled music, we can hardly tell; but are we not all accustomed to this use of the term? "My daughter is learning singing from Signor A., the violin from Herr B., and music—meaning the piano—from Miss Jones." Or again, "Mary has dropped her music lessons and is learning singing instead"—poor singing, if there is no music in it. I would that we could drop this silly custom and realize that music is something beyond and above the instrument; that the instrument, whether it be a piano or a violin or a voice, is only a medium for that strange and impalpable something which to the majority of mankind seems as necessary as the breath of Heaven.